

## CFUW Brief History

### In the Beginning:

The remarkable industrial expansion and the growth of urban populations that occurred after the beginning of the First World War opened up many opportunities for women in industry and in social work. Already well established as teachers, women now entered medicine, law, journalism, nursing and social work.

The university women in Canada who had founded Clubs early in the century had dreamt of a national federation. Early in **1919**, Dr. Winifred Cullis of Britain, who had lectured in Toronto University during the war years, suggested that the Canadians might organize a national federation in order to become one of the first countries to join in the emerging International Federation of University Women. Dr. Virginia Gildersleeve<sup>1</sup> of the American Association of University Women offered to let Canadians be part of AAUW – but suggested they might prefer to have their own federation.

In **March 1919** four women<sup>2</sup> decided to create the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW)<sup>3</sup>. They drafted a constitution, sought the approval of the existing clubs and planned an organizational meeting for the coming summer<sup>4</sup>.

In **August 1919**, at the Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, six clubs<sup>5</sup> adopted the proposed constitution and selected the first officers<sup>6</sup> and Committee Chairs. They declared education to be the first interest of the new federation, planned to set up a scholarship<sup>7</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Dean of Barnard College

<sup>2</sup> Mrs J.A. Cooper, President of the Toronto Club, Mrs. R.F. McWilliams, President of the Winnipeg Club; Miss May Skinner, then representing Canada on the American Association's committee on International Affairs; and Miss Laila Scott in Toronto

<sup>3</sup> They declared themselves a national unified federation of university women's clubs sharing a common purpose

<sup>4</sup> August 1919

<sup>5</sup> **Six clubs** – Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton and Victoria as well as McGill Alumnae sent delegates

<sup>6</sup> **The first Officers of the Federation were:**

Mrs R.F. McWilliams: President (Margaret), Winnipeg  
Miss May Skinner: First Vice President, Toronto  
Mrs. Douglas Thom: Second Vice President, Regina  
Mrs G.L. Lennox: Recording Secretary, Winnipeg  
Mrs Charles Schofield: Treasurer, Victoria  
Mrs Digby Wheeler: Archives, Winnipeg  
Miss Elsie Moore: Membership, Winnipeg  
Miss Lexa Denne: Secretary, Victoria

### **The Committees of the Federation were:**

Education: Miss Geneva Misener  
Vocations: Miss Elsinore Macpherson  
Scholarship: Mrs. D.B. Gillies  
Publications: Miss K.M. Haig  
Recognition of the Standing of Colleges and Universities: Miss C.M. Derrick.

<sup>7</sup> For study in another country

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to get women to stand for election to Boards, and to support women's engagement in politics.

CFUW members attended the first IFUW<sup>8</sup> Meeting held in London England, July 1920. Dr. Margaret McWilliams was elected Vice President of IFUW.

### Building the foundations

Many of our early leaders were rooted within the academic community and the earliest years of CFUW<sup>9</sup> display a sense of purpose and pride, marked by efforts to build cross-country cooperation and work for the advancement of women by studying the status of women in the community, in academia and in the workplace and by supporting education through the foundation of a scholarship program<sup>10</sup>. CFUW has advocated for pay equity since its earliest days.<sup>11</sup> It continues to advocate for it today (2009)<sup>12</sup>.

CFUW and IFUW took great interest in the work of the League of Nations, women's advancement and in intellectual cooperation among nations.

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#### <sup>8</sup> IFUW

The original purpose of IFUW was: *"To promote understanding and friendship between university women of the nations of the world, and thereby to further their interests and to develop between their countries sympathy and mutual helpfulness."*

The promotion of peace was a key topic for discussion, with the keynote speaker stressing the need for international goodwill and the need to work together toward international understanding to promote peace. Additional speakers spoke of the need to work together to promote education, international friendship, scholarships and equality. Equal pay for equal work was discussed too.

#### <sup>9</sup> The Clubs that joined at that time were:

Edmonton  
Kingston, Queen's Alumnae  
London  
Montreal, McGill Alumnae  
Ottawa  
Regina  
Saskatoon  
Toronto  
Victoria  
Winnipeg  
Winnipeg, Wesley Alumnae  
Membership reached 1,123 and 12 clubs within the first year.

<sup>10</sup> Establishing a yearly scholarship of \$1,000 for post-graduate study in another country (the traveling Scholarship)

<sup>11</sup> Note: CFUW went to the Government of Canada to ensure the recognition of Dr. Alice E. Wilson's doctoral degree, by her employer – Natural Resources Canada. Dr. Wilson subsequently became a member of the Royal Academy and a Science Hall of Famer.

<sup>12</sup> Appeared before the House Committee (Parliament) to present Brief on Pay Equity, 2009

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At their first Triennial Meeting they<sup>13</sup> resolved to: raise money for scholarships; urge members to stand for election to the governing bodies of universities; support women entering the Senate of Canada; do a study of libraries; produce “The Chronicle” and to meet every three years. This first meeting was held in Toronto in **August 1920** with no proxy voting.

Demographics: By 1923 at the second CFUW Triennial<sup>14</sup>, CFUW had 1300 members from 75 universities. They awarded three Fellowships. The Membership Lists recorded 27 different kinds of degrees. Eighty-one percent held a Bachelors degree, 11 percent a Masters. Only one percent had a doctorate. A number of members held other types of degrees (e.g. MD, LLB etc). They accepted women with degrees from all over the world. Half of all CFUW members were leaders in voluntary organizations, about a third were teachers and the rest were professional women. The two reports were:

- The employment of women in educational institutions
- The condition of libraries in Canada – they recommended establishing library schools.

**Consolidation:** The 1923 – 1926 Triennium<sup>15</sup> was one of consolidation and the President visited many Clubs to raise awareness of CFUW’s role in the International Federation and to emphasize that CFUW is one national body. Canadians were very supportive of IFUW at that time housed in Crosby Hall, London.

CFUW continues to examine education and women’s equal access to employment and pay: They studied:

- Secondary school standards and curricula
- The educational possibilities of radio in Canada; and
- Set up the Vocations Bureau to help women graduates find work in their field

**Expansion of interests:** during the Depression years<sup>16</sup> members were concerned about:

- Membership in the League of Nations
- The German government’s discrimination against certain segments of its people
- Establishing a special committee on the legal and economic status of women to work with IFUW.
- The Chronicle was sent to every member yearly.

Social change, peace-ballots, protests against re-armament and an all-out effort to avert disaster in the midst of economic depression, the looming threat of war and a sense of impending disaster, marked the era.

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<sup>13</sup> Note: At that time these women were not “persons” in the matter of privileges.

<sup>14</sup> Minaki, Ontario

<sup>15</sup> Mrs. Walter Vaughan

<sup>16</sup> Presidents Mabel Thom; Laura Newman and Mrs Melrose

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Women, particularly married women, encountered discrimination against entry into gainful occupations. CFUW supported work for women based on their qualifications and not on their gender. A study on "*Women in Administrative Positions in Canada*" encouraged women to work towards gaining equal status in the workplace.

### The War Effort – the melting pot:

Clubs and members entered a different phase. At the outbreak of war<sup>17</sup> members were urged to serve in any way they could. The Canadians set up a refugee fund and they offered 300 homes to the children of British Graduates – but the British Government refused to allow the children travel because of the danger of the Atlantic passage. Women served in the International Red Cross, as volunteers and in the armed services. At this time, women took over jobs previously assigned to men. It was a shadow of things to come and laid the ground work for the next wave of feminism.

By 1940 the focus shifted to displaced university women and the kernel of the idea that later became the Hegg Hoffet Relief Fund.

Between 1943-1946<sup>18</sup> the number of Clubs grew from 38 to 54. Members collected and sent warm clothing to Europe and raised \$6,000 to provide post-war refresher courses for European members. In 1942 a reconstruction committee set up by the Government of Canada contained **no reference to women war workers** – Dr. Margaret McWilliams<sup>19</sup> report gave wide attention to this lack.

### Expansion

In the immediate Post War years, CFUW saw its greatest period of expansion as women entered more and different fields of study, attended universities in greater numbers and enjoyed the post war release from the Depression. CFUW's work expanded to a wider range of interests and to the establishment of cooperation with other organizations such as the Canadian Education Association, CARE Canada, Canadian Library Association, United Nations Association UNESCO and more. The President and the Officers of the Federation continued to stress the concept of a national federation and their links with IFUW when they visited CFUW Clubs.

In 1949, Dr Marion Elder Grant<sup>20</sup> was elected CFUW President. Her work laid stress on the importance of a national federation, and a unified sense of purpose. Her successor Dr. Martha Law set up two new Fellowships, one to honour Dr. Margaret McWilliams and the other to honour Dr. A Vibert Douglas, President of the International Federation of University Women 1947 – 1950.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Mrs W.J. Melrose

<sup>18</sup> Under Dr. MacDonnell

<sup>19</sup> First CFUW President

<sup>20</sup> Dean of Women from Acadia University was elected CFUW President. Dr Grant was named "woman of the century" when Acadia celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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One of CFUW's strengths lies in the diversity of the scholarship among its members. In the 1950s members expanded their interests and began to investigate and advocate on public issues such as penal reform, equal pay for work of equal value, trafficking of women, citizenship and immigration, statelessness and the equivalence of university degrees. Clubs grew in strength, established programs, their own local scholarship programs and study and interest groups. The resolutions process became well established. Membership reached 9,140 (the same as it is today) in 1958.

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<sup>21</sup> Dean of Women at Queen's University. Dr Douglas was an astro-physicist and there is a crater on Venus named after her

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### Non-Partisan Advocates:

Under our 13<sup>th</sup> CFUW President<sup>22</sup>, Dr. Doris Saunders, CFUW began to present Briefs to Parliament including one on the UN Convention on Political Rights.

And then CFUW President Laura Sabia<sup>23</sup> one of the most dynamic women to come out of the women's movement called for a Royal Commission on the Status of Women and brought women from all over Canada to Ottawa to speak with one voice. CFUW made a significant contribution to the Royal Commission with its Brief. Throughout the following years CFUW contributed to advancing women's equality through its resolutions on reproductive issues, education, environment, literacy, justice and more.

### The Centennial:

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#### <sup>22</sup> List CFUW Presidents

		Elected at
1. Margaret McWilliams	1919 - 1923	Winnipeg and affirmed in Toronto (1920)
2. Mrs Walter Vaughan	1923 - 1926	Minaki, Ontario
3. Dean Mary L. Bollert	1926 - 1928	Montreal, QC
4. Laila Scott	1928 - 1931	Vancouver, BC
5. Mrs. Douglas Thom	1931 - 1934	Ottawa , ON
6. Laura Newman	1934 - 1937	Edmonton
7. Charlotte Melrose	1937 - 1940	Toronto
8. Dr. Dorothy Turville	1940 - 1943	Calgary
9. Dr. Ursilla MacDonnell	1943 - 1946	Quebec
10. Mrs. Ruth Crummy	1946 - 1949	Winnipeg
11. Dr. Marion Elder Grant	1949 - 1952	Vancouver
12. Dr. Martha Law	1952 - 1955	Ottawa
13. Dr. Doris Saunders	1955 - 1958	Edmonton< AB
14. Dr. Vivian Morton	1958 - 1961	Montreal, QC
15. Margaret MacLellan	1961 - 1964	London, ON
16. Dr. Laura Sabia	1964 - 1967	Winnipeg, MB
17. Dr. Margaret Orange	1967 - 1970	Vancouver, BC
18. Dr. Gwendolyn Black	1970 - 1973	York University, Toronto, ON
19. Dr. Ruth Bell	1973 - 1976	Ottawa, ON
20. Dr. Jean Steer	1976 - 1982	Quebec City, QC
22. Margaret Strongitharm	1982 - 1985	Winnipeg, MB
23. Linda Souter	1985 - 1988	Calgary, AB
24. Thomasine Irwin	1988 - 1990	Ottawa, ON
25. Peggy Matheson	1990 - 1994	Edmonton, AB
26. Phyllis Scott	1994 - 1996	Winnipeg, MB
27. Betty Bayless	1996-1998	St. John's, Newfoundland
28. Mavis Moore	1998 - 2000	Kelowna, BC
29. Roberta A. Brooks	2000 - 2002	Guelph, ON
30. Jacqueline Jacques	2002 - 2004	Richmond, BC
31. Rose V. Beatty	2004 - 2006	Regina, SK
32. Ardith Toogood	2006 - 2008	Edmonton, AB
33. Patricia DuVal	2008 -2010	Montreal, Quebec

<sup>23</sup> 1964-1967

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In 1967, determined to support both scholarships<sup>24</sup> and IFUW, CFUW moved to set up the CFUW Charitable Trust fund to support post-graduate study for women and to provide money for the CFUW Fellowships Program increases the visibility of the federation and fulfills CFUW's education mandate. Prior to this CFUW's scholarships came from CFUW dues. At today's level of funding this would mean an extra \$11 per year per member.

Under the guidance of Laura Sabia CFUW celebrated Canada's centennial by producing "The Clear Spirit" – a biographical account of 20 noteworthy Canadian women and their times.

### **Women's Equality Issues:**

In the 1970s under Dr. Ruth Bell CFUW set up a *Roster of Qualified Women* and challenged the government of the day to have equal numbers of women and men in appointed positions, including Crown Corporations.

In 1979, CFUW members were involved in the work on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and later in the Nairobi – Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985). This led to even closer involvement with women's equality rights issues. During the 1980s the "Journal" was produced four times yearly and provided a transition from the Chronicle. Reports for the CFUW AGM were produced yearly and circulated to Clubs.

### **The move to Ottawa<sup>25</sup> - a true National Presence**

By 1985 the time had come to have a real national presence to interact with the Government of Canada and National Office was established at 55 Parkdale Avenue, Linda Souter as the first President in the newly established office, and Elizabeth Cureton as her Executive Secretary – later to become CFUW's first Executive Director<sup>26</sup>. The office was set up with a staff of four<sup>27</sup>. The office was supplied with gifts of furniture, chairs and the like – from members of CFUW Ottawa, and supported by an active volunteer base<sup>28</sup>.

The work of setting up networks and contacts with Government had begun in earnest. The Chair of the Legislation Committee was tasked with the duty being the Government contact – and she was to be situated in Ottawa for this purpose. This function has since been taken over by staff in the office. Interaction with Government at that time was regulated through the office of the Minister responsible for the Status of Women and was

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<sup>24</sup> CFUW changed the name to "Fellowships" in line with IFUW awards and to underline support for post-graduate study

<sup>25</sup> Prior to this the President set up an office – where-ever she could acquire free space and hired a Secretary. This resulted in slow turn-over between Triennials and lack of continuity.

<sup>26</sup> Served from 1985-1994

<sup>27</sup> Dorothy Howland, Executive Book-Keeper and Fellowships Secretary; Julia Hadrill and Harriet Leggett worked as secretaries.

<sup>28</sup> Numbered close to 30 at one time – now not more than four to six

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much more formal than it is today. At one time Minister would meet with a number of women's groups, and field questions<sup>29</sup>.

As the office continued to evolve, the role of the Board changed also. In the 1980s most Board members were not working outside the home. This is no longer the case. The staff works with the Board to meet the perceived need for a visible voice nationally and to ensure that members are served<sup>30</sup>. The office moved in 1994 to Dupuis Street and again in 1997 to Bank Street<sup>31</sup>.

In 1985, at the CFUW Triennial Meeting Calgary, CFUW President Margaret Strongitharm made the guest speaker Dr Roberta Bondar, an honorary member on the spot. The Constitution and By-Laws Chair was called upon to amend the By-Laws after the fact and CFUW sent a T-shirt into space with Dr Bondar!

At the last Triennial Conference of the Federation in Ottawa in 1988, CFUW hosted a side-by-side AAUW/CFUW Cross Board conference on the Environment with Dr. Maurice Strong and leaders from AAUW as part of the program.

And in 1988 under President Tammie Irwin CFUW moved to a Biennial system and to expand CFUW's interests to environmental and health issues. During this time CFUW became involved with a series of government funded "Africa-Canada" Projects that dealt with capacity building and strategic planning. Linda Souter produced a Hand Book for use in IFUW affiliates.

In September 1994, the first Communicator was produced to replace CFUW mailings that were becoming expensive and cumbersome. Early Communicators were a vehicle for Board action and articles and were produced in National Office. At that time there was a major Board re-organization and down-sizing from 32 to a Board of 14, to meet the call for a balanced budget.

### Formalising CFUW Advocacy

In the 1990s came involvement in environmental issues that included the Bruntland Report and the Rio Conference on the environment. Some CFUW AGMs would have as many as 19 or 20 resolutions for debate and discussion.

And in 1989 came – the École Polytechnique Massacre and the establishment of the École Polytechnique Award in memory of the 14 young women, a visible sign of CFUW's commitment to equality and an end to violence against women.

Throughout the decade CFUW was involved in Violence against Women, Gun Control and Gun related issues, working side by side with the Gun Control Coalition to bring in Bill C-68, and the gun registry. CFUW was a leader in its involvement, later in the

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<sup>29</sup> This has not happened in more than a decade.

<sup>30</sup> CFUW was incorporated in 1991

<sup>31</sup> Executive Directors: E.R. Cureton: 1985-1994; Sheila Givens: 1994-1995; Kimberley Young: 1995-1999; Susan Russell: 1999-2010



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decade, with Mines Action Canada and with the signing of the Ottawa Protocol against Landmines. CFUW was present at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ottawa Protocol. CFUW continues to advocate for Gun Control and for the Gun Registry and has firmly opposed all efforts to dismantle the registry, standing beside the Chiefs of Police and other major women's groups, who believe that the registration of guns is one way to make Canada's women and children safer.

CFUW was involved in World Conference on Education for All – CFUW woman represented IFUW at this major UN conference. This led to much policy and action on literacy followed by CFUW's involvement with UN World Conference on Women, Take Action for Equality Development and Peace and the Follow-Up Plain language document in which CFUW supplied the plain language material on the Girl child and close alignment with advocacy on these issues. CFUW served on the National Advisory Committee to the Government of Canada in the run-up to the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, in 1994. In 1997, CFUW gained special consultative status at the United Nations (ECOSOC). CFUW is represented on the Education Committee of the Canadian Sub-Commission to UNESCO

The Brief: A yearly Brief to the Government of Canada, set up in 1989, continues to this day, as a guide to Club and National Advocacy. CFUW has long written letters<sup>32</sup> to government to express its concerns, has catalogued its resolutions into the CFUW policy book and had formalised its grass-roots involvement with the resolutions process. There are now many sample letters and materials available to assist grassroots members in reaching out on CFUW policies at the local level.

### CFUW Today

Nationally CFUW is seen as well respected and progressive voice for women in the nation's capital. CFUW concerns are decided by the grassroots at the AGM, and CFUW has a vast body of policy on which to take action. CFUW brings your concerns to the attention of the Government of the day, and before members of the opposition – within the framework of non-partisan political action, writes position papers, press releases, letters and Briefs. CFUW materials are well researched and remain a source of information upon which other organizations can draw.

CFUW women are seen as women who lead the way, as leaders in their communities working to raise money for community events and as women who work to meet community needs. At the national level, CFUW brings CFUW concerns and policies before the Government of the day, presents Briefs and speaks out for its members.

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<sup>32</sup> CFUW's boilerplate: *Founded in 1919, CFUW is a national, voluntary, self-funded, non-partisan organization of women graduates and students in 112 clubs across Canada who work to improve the status of women and girl in education, peace, justice and human rights. CFUW holds special consultative status at the United Nations (ECOSOC) and it belongs to the Sectoral Committee on Education of the Canadian Sub-commission for UNESCO. CFUW is the largest of 79 affiliates of the International Federation of University Women.*

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Since the election in 2006 of the Harper Conservatives, CFUW's relationship with Government has changed. We continue to advocate often and with focus of issues of concern to our members. We try to build alliances where we can – including with members of the Conservative party. But more particularly some of our more rewarding activities have been taking action in coalition with other groups.

The first indication that others viewed us with growing respect took place in 2003 when CFUW received a legacy of \$275,000.00 from the Canadian Home Economics Association which was closing its doors. Since then we formed alliances in Ontario to defeat the attempt to bring in Shari'a law for Muslim women. . Based on CFUW policy CFUW Ontario Council was able to mobilise women to protest against this action in solidarity with our Muslim sisters.

We have worked in coalition with the Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights. We provided National Association of Women and the Law with office space until they had some stability – we were approached by CARE Canada in partnership and by an organization called Peacebuild and Oxfam.

As we reach the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century CFUW is leading women's organization that is not afraid to speak out on its policies and that can be relied on to produce a Brief, write a letter, sign onto a petition based on the wealth of policies laid down by members who have gone before us. Since its beginnings, all of CFUW's policies come from its grass roots to its Annual Meetings for vote, adoption and action by members.